

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 02271

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, US
SUBJECT: NATO FORCE GOALS FOR THE US

REF: STATE 49455 (DTG 250127Z FEB 78)

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1. IN PREPARING THE DRAFT COUNTRY CHAPTER ON US FORCE GOALS, THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF (IS) WILL PRESENT A SET OF ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FOR THE US, BASED ON THE ESTIMATED COST OF FORCE PROPOSALS NOT IN NATIONAL PLANS. DURING THE AS YET UNSCHEDULED "TRILATERAL" ON US FORCE PROPOSALS AND IN OUR INFORMAL CONTACTS WITH THE IS, WE BELIEVE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE LEVEL OF PROPOSED CHALLENGES THAT WILL APPEAR IN THE DRAFT COUNTRY CHAPTER, TOWARD A RANGE ACCEPTABLE TO WASHINGTON. BASED ON OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE IS, WE EXPECT THE US TRILATERAL IN THE WEEK OF MARCH 13.

2. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE 1979-84 FORCE PROPOSALS NOT ALREADY IN US PLANS IS ABOUT \$16,665 MILLION (1976 PRICES),
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WHICH WOULD REQUIRE A REAL ANNUAL INCREASE OF ABOUT 0.75 PERCENT OVER THE PLANNING PERIOD -- IN EFFECT, THE "CHALLENGE" -- ABOVE THE 3 PERCENT REAL GROWTH IN US DEFENSE EXPENDITURE CURRENTLY PLANNED.

3. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THOSE PROPOSALS THAT REF A INDICATED THE UNITED STATES CANNOT ACCEPT OR "RESERVES"

UPON AMOUNTS TO \$14,424 MILLION. SUBTRACTING THIS FIGURE FROM THE ORIGINAL CHALLENGE WOULD HAVE AN ACCEPTED US CHALLENGE ABOVE NATIONAL PLANS OF ABOUT \$2,242 MILLION, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE APPROXIMATELY A 0.1 PERCENT ANNUAL REAL GROWTH ABOVE PLANNED SPENDING.

4. AS WASHINGTON IS AWARE, ACCEPTANCE OF A FORCE GOAL IS NOT TANTAMOUNT TO A NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENT. RATHER, THE FORCE GOALS ARE INTENDED TO PRESENT NATIONS WITH A REASONABLE CHALLENGE ABOVE COUNTRY PLANS AND TO SERVE AS A BENCH MARK OR OBJECTIVE FOR FUTURE PLANNING. THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGE IS VIEWED AS PROVIDING A GENERAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR FORWARD DEFENSE PLANNING. ALLIES ACCEPT THIS CHALLENGE CONCEPT, AND IT APPEARS THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE UNUSUALLY LOW CHALLENGE FOR THE UK, ALLIES WILL ACCEPT ECONOMIC CHALLENGES RANGING FROM 0.5 TO 1.5 PERCENT ABOVE PRESENT PLANS. DESPITE THE LARGE AND IMPRESSIVE SET OF US FORCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS UNDERWAY OR PLANNED, ALLIES WHO HAVE ACCEPTED CHALLENGES OF UP TO 1.5 PERCENT WILL BE DISTURBED AT AN ONLY 0.1 PERCENT CHALLENGE FOR THE US.

5. THOUGH WE ARE, OF COURSE, PREPARED TO "STONEWALL" AT THE 0.1 PERCENT FIGURE, WE BELIEVE THAT, AS THE LEADER OF THE ALLIANCE, THE US CANNOT AFFORD TO BE SEEN AS RESISTING WHAT ALLIES WOULD SEE AS A REASONABLE CHALLENGE. THE CONFIDENTIAL

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DEFENSE REVIEW COMMITTEE (DRC) IS CERTAIN (WITH THE PROMPTING OF THE IS) TO PRESS FOR A HIGHER CHALLENGE, WHICH WE WOULD HAVE TO FIGHT UP TO THE DPC OR EVEN MINISTERIAL LEVEL. SUCH A BATTLE CERTAINLY WOULD UNDERCUT OUR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL BACKING FOR DEFENSE IMPROVEMENTS FROM OUR ALLIES (PARTICULARLY TO ACCOMMODATE THE LONG-TERM DEFENSE PROGRAM).

6. WE SUGGEST, THEREFORE, THAT WASHINGTON CONSIDER WHAT, IF ANY, HIGHER LEVEL OF ECONOMIC CHALLENGE THE US WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT, SO THAT WE MIGHT BETTER BE ABLE TO SHAPE THE RANGE OF CHALLENGES THE IS WILL PRESENT TO THE DRC IN THE DRAFT COUNTRY CHAPTER. DURING THE LAST FORCE GOALS EXERCISE (1976), FOR EXAMPLE, THE US ACCEPTED A CHALLENGE OF 0.3 PERCENT ON TOP OF PLANNED ANNUAL INCREASES OF 2 PERCENT. ACCEPTING THIS YEAR PROPOSALS AM04, AM05 AND AM07, WITH THE QUALIFICATIONS OUTLINED IN PARA 4A OF REF A, WOULD BRING THE FORCE GOAL PACKAGE TO \$6,420 MILLION, RESULTING IN A SIMILAR 0.3 PERCENT CHALLENGE (ANNUAL INCREASE) ABOVE COUNTRY PLANS.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON GUIDANCE BY OPENING OF

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